

THE HAND OF FATE

...OR....

"FIFTY YEARS AFTER"



By BERESFORD GALE



A. M. E.
NASHVILLE, SUNDAY SCHOOL, TENNESSEE.
UNION.





THE HAND OF FATE

or Fifty Years After



....A....
Powerful Race Drama in
Four Acts



BY BERESFORD GALE



"IT WAS THE HAND OF FATE"—SHAKESPEARE.



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CHARACTERS.

DICK WALKER (*The coming man*)
LEMUEL CRAVEN (*Boss of the plantation*)
SAM HARRIS (*The Negro's Friend*)
'BUD THOMAS (*Dick's friend*)
JIM TAYLOR (*A pessimistic scamp*)
'POP FRAY (*Dick's uncle*)
'PAT MURPHY (*Negro hater*)
DAGO FRANK (*Negro hater*)
LEVI GOLDBERG (*A real Shylock*)
MAY BROOKS (*Dick's sweetheart*)
BELL SCHRINER (*Craven's mistress*)
MISS JOSEPHINE (*Bell's maid*)

SCENE—(A Cotton field). PLACE—(Lynchburg, Va.) TIME—
(The present).

THE HAND OF FATE

OR FIFTY YEARS AFTER.

SYNOPSIS.

Richard Walker, a Negro, on becoming of age, finds conditions in the South unbearable, and decides to seek his fortune in other directions. His friend, 'Bud Thomas, a queer but sincere individual, decides to throw in his lot with "Dick." The day before their departure, the master of the plantation, Lemuel Craven, a white man who is nothing but an unconvicted murderer and forger, happens on the scene, and plans for Dick's downfall, even though he had already robbed him of his father's inheritance. In the midst of Craven's machinations, Sam Harris, another white man, who is in deed and word the Negro's friend, succeeds in frustrating Craven's evil plans, and saving Walker's life. In the meantime, Craven who is the common law husband of Bell Schriner, a white woman, on becoming at variance with her, attempts her murder. She is saved in the very nick of time by Walker. To show her gratitude, Bell asks Walker to visit her at her house at midnight, and when he refuses to murder Craven for her, she turns on him, and brands him as her traducer. May Brooks who is Walker's sweetheart, defies death to save her lover, and through great strategy helps him to escape. While Jim Taylor, "who loves the white man" is abducting Bell Schriner to remove her from Craven's path, he is killed. Levi Goldberg, a shrewd but benevolent American Jew, holds the supreme proofs in the evidence of Craven's crime, but is afraid to say anything till he is sure he is right.

After ten years' absence, during which time Walker mounts to fame, fortune and honor abroad, he returns home to wed his sweetheart, only to find himself immersed in the direst tangle of intrigue and hate. His old friend Harris who has been working on the mystery all the time, happens to drop in to congratulate "Dick" on his rapid rise in life. He meets Craven and explanations of a very different nature follow. Goldberg, who is also an unexpected visitor, after fighting his way into the reception room, turns out to be just in time to help in the solution of things, while Sister Agnes, Miss Josephine's chaperon, turns out to be no other person than Bell Schriner reformed. Walker, who at this moment is in dire distress and on the verge of being taken off to jail, is agreeably surprised in having the tables turned in

his favor, while Craven is hurried off to jail by the same officer who promises that if he had anything to do with it, Craven would go to the "chair" before he went to trial.

In the end, justice triumphs, and the Honorable Richard Walker, Negro, being exonerated becomes the rightful heir to the Farmdale Plantations where he marries his sweetheart after the long lapse of ten years.

The ingenious workings of fickle Fortune have undoubtedly lent her aid in building up the fabrics of—

"THE HAND OF FATE."

ACT I. SCENE I.

The play opens on a Southern cottonfield with bales of cotton lying loosely around. There are three or four Negroes lying indolently around. They are singing softly the tune of "Swanee River," which is heard in the distance soft and low. Pop Fray, an old man, enters right wing, walking slowly. He hears the singing in the distance. He stops and listens.

POP FRAY: Ah! It sartinly sound like dem chil'ren 'armonizin' down yonder on Marse Craven's plantation. Ah! It makes ma ole soul feel so good to hear dem singin' dat sweet ole tune. It's de only 'appiness we poor creatures git down hear, 'cause dat man is so hard, an' he treat dem poor chil'ren so mean, dat if it wasn't for de few minutes dey get to sit down an' forget all de hardship and trouble in singin', I believe every one of their hearts would break. I'll jest walk down to de plantation an' join me ole voice right in wid de boys. *(He walks along stage slowly and exits left wing. The chorus sings to a finish when the old man comes in. Curtain.)*

CHORUS: Hello, Pop!

POP FRAY: Ah, chil'ren, it does ma ole heart so much good to hear you all singin' dat good ole song. Forty years ago, jest after 'Mancipation, when we all were made free, we sang dat same ole song down yonder in Mississippi. Ah! How glorious it was dem days. Den times was different from it is now. Den de white folks was good to us poor creatures; dey gave us clothes, an' land an' money. Dis very plantation was willed to my poor brother Cephas by his massa who was a Christian Jew. Poor Cephas, he was a good man, an' a hard worker. He made dis field pay well, an' he kep' it gwine in fust class shape till dis Mr. Craven came along wid another deed for de property dat dey say was found in de old man's safe, an' he took the plantation away from poor Cephas. Oh, chil'ren, it was terrible to see him after dat. He jest wasted away to a skelenton. Craven jest hired him an' me to work here for little an' nothin', an' den after he got us on de place, he began

to treat us like a lot of dogs. Poor Cephas, he couldn't stand it. He got so mad one day, dat he threatened to kill Craven, an' den de trouble began. Craven jest schemed an' plotted, an' plotted an' schemed till he got poor Cephas sent to prison, where he died from a broken heart. O, Lord, help us poor creatures, 'cause dis life is more dan we can stand!

CHORUS: Don't cry, Pop, don't cry!

POP FRAY: Ah, chil'ren, you must bear wid de ole man, if Ah am weak an' feeble, 'cause Ah done been thro' it all, an' Ah pray God dat de day will never come again as de one dat is past an' gone.

CHORUS: Amen to dat, Pop, amen!

BUD THOMAS: Well, Pop, you can cry if you wants to, an' you can stay if you wants to, but here's one black chile dat ain't gwine stand it, an' I ain't gwine to cry nether. So there!

JIM TAYLOR: Oh, Bud, you shet up! You's always gwine do something, an' you's jest as 'fraid o' dat white man as anybody else; you an' dat Dick Walker is always agitatin' an' agitatin,' an' when de time come you can't do nothin.' What's de use o' kickin' an' kickin' 'gainst de white man, when he's got all de money an' de say, an' you ain't got nothin'? You might as well take it easy, an' don't listen to dat big-headed fool of a Dick.

BUD THOMAS (*temper rising*): Don't you call Dick no big-headed fool, 'cause he's my friend; an', moreover, he's got more sense in two minutes dan you would have if you lived to be as old as Mathusalem.

JIM TAYLOR: You're a dirty liar, Bud Thomas, an' if you gie me any more o' your lip I'll beat you till you can't see straight.

POP FRAY: Now, chil'ren, don't do no fussin', 'cause you all have trouble enough fussin' wid Marse Craven.

BUD THOMAS: Beat me! You're another liar Jim Taylor, and I'll chase myself off the earth if I let a puppy like you beat me!

TAYLOR (*rising and approaching Bud*): What! You call me a puppy? I'll show you in two minutes. (*They rush together and start to fight. Bud knocks Taylor down twice, stands over him for a minute, then turns his back and walks away.*)

BUD: I guess you've had enough! (*Taylor rises from floor with open knife to stab Bud in the back. (Rushes after him.)*)

TAYLOR: No, I haven't! (*Enter Dick, R. W. Dick grabs Taylor's hand with descending knife.*)

DICK: Yes, you have! And you'll get a little more if you try any of those dirty tricks again. Be a man, and don't act the coward. Now, drop that knife and get out o' here, and do it as quick as you can. Drop it, I say! (*Taylor drops knife slowly, and turns with menacing look at Dick, walks to L. W. slowly, stops, turns, then walks quickly out.*) Exit L. W.

DICK: Hello, Uncle, how are you? I am real glad to see you again!

POP: Ah, Dick, I'se more'n glad to see you back safe an' sound from Richmond. I was scared half to death all the time you were gone dat dem

white folks would never let you get back here alive. I'se always so 'fraid o' dat proud tongue, an' dat higherlutin' manner o' yours; 'cause dem white folks don't like it, and some is meaner an' more prejudice dan dey used to be when I was a slave fifty years ago.

DICK: Yes, Pop, you are right; these cursed oppressors are more determined and relentless than they ever were before. Fifty years ago they helped with land and money those that served them well. Then the thought of equal rights had not entered their heads. Then the Negro as a hired beast of burden was not considered but as a dog. But now the times have changed. Slavery has passed. The chains and the lash have gone and in their places have risen the vicious vein of hatred; and in the very effort of my race to establish his equality, he maps out his own opposition. Yes, true it is that slavery is past, but the aftermath is like the reptile's sting. It eats and eats and eats until it saps the very marrow from our hearts. But I have made up my mind to stand it no longer. No more of this semi-serfdom for me. No more of my life shall be wasted in this cursed place. My world shall not be bounded by the Farmdale Plantation and its peonage and disgrace. Rather would I spend my days trying to better the conditions of my people in darkest Africa, than remain here as a lackey to some uncultivated tramp.

BUD THOMAS: Right, Dick, right; you have said the same thing that I've got in here (*tapping heart*), and whenever you're ready to move just remember that Bud Thomas has always got his trunk packed. (*Bud shows small bundle. Enter Lemuel Craven, L. W.*)

CRAVEN: But before you both go, remember that Lemuel Craven, Esq., has got a whole lot to say about it. I think you are reckoning without your host.

DICK: That's true, Lemuel Craven. I have reckoned with you long enough. I have served you long enough. As servant and slave, I have been your dog, and I have resolved to be so no longer, and from now on, God helping me, I shall continue to reckon without you for the remainder of my life.

CRAVEN: Yes, you ungrateful rascal. This is the thanks I get for hiring you niggers around here. You're a worthless and treacherous lot. I could get hundreds of white men to work here for me that would do more work and give less trouble than you all, a black herd of rattlesnakes. You are an ungrateful lot. Yours is the race that repays kindness with treachery.

DICK: Kindness? Do *you* talk of kindness? You who have sacrificed a thousand Negroes to the lust of your vile passions! You, Lemuel Craven, who killed my poor mother with hard work and harder words; you who drove my poor father to end his life in prison and disgrace; you talk of kindness? The word is as foreign to you as the very gates of Heaven. You get ample service for the wages you give. The mere pittance we

receive is not enough to hold soul and body together. Look at the vast sums you receive from the sweat of our brow. And what do you give us? Nothing! No, I'll not stand it. There's only one step between this and death, and live or die, I'd rather take that step than suffer the tortures of this living hell!

CRAVEN: The little education you got in Richmond has completely turned your knotty head. You have grown bigger than your boots. You seem to forget that we are still the masters, and you the slaves. Had this happened a few years ago, I'd have tied you to the stake, and lashed you till you bled. But those days are past; the whipping post has gone, but the lynching bough is ever at hand to stem the tide of your rising ambition. Ha! ha! ha! Remember, Dick Walker, and all the rest of you, your masters still hold the handle, while you still grasp the blade. Ha! ha! ha! You still grasp the blade. (*Exit Craven, R. W. They look at each other stupefied for a moment.*)

BUD: I'se gwine to turn loose dat blade, if it takes every finger off my hand to 'complish it.

DICK: Spoken like a man, Bud. Would to God every Negro in the land would think the same and save this mise-able race.

POP: You're right, chil'ren, you're right. I kin see more'n more every day how mean dese white folks is gettin'. It ain't no use tryin' to stoop and conquer, 'cause de lower you stoop, the lower day will make you stoop. We's got to take a stand for ourselves, an' ole an' feeble though I be, wid only a few short years at most to live, yet I'se willing to sacrifice those years, and to willingly lay down this life, if by so doing, I kin help in some small way to save the people of this poor, downtrodden race. (*Dick goes up and shakes hands with Pop.*)

DICK: God bless you, Pop.

(*Enter Harris.*)

HARRIS: Ah, good day men, I see you are enjoying the beauty of the day.

BUD: Yes, sah, we is enjoyin' the beauty o' eatin'.

HARRIS: Well, that is a good thing, but you know what the old poet tells us: "Live not to eat, but eat to live."

BUD: Well, Ah guess we does both.

HARRIS: But can you tell me where I will find Lemuel Craven?

DICK: Yes, he has just left here. Gone to another part of the field, where he can threaten and tyrannize the poor laborers. You will find him over there, (*pointing*), on the other side of the bluff.

HARRIS: Has he been threatening you?

DICK: Yes, threatening us with lynching because we have asked for justice. But I suppose you are his friend. Well, what does it matter? You are all white together. You all acknowledge the superiority of your race, and the inferiority of the Negro, let him be what he will or may.

HARRIS: Stop, my friend; you are wrong. That is not true. My very errand here is to ask the master to consider the man. Do not judge us all

alike, for there are hearts as true as steel, sympathy as strong as death, and purses as open as the grave, that are yearning and ever willing to help the fallen victim and establish on a sound and eternal basis the blessed brotherhood of man.

BUD: Ah wish Ah could find some o' dem purses.

DICK: It is not often that Farmdale Plantations is visited with sentiment such as you have expressed.

HARRIS: No, nor any other place, for that matter. There is a feeling on the part of those who would really help the Negro to shelter themselves behind the veil of public sentiment, and to hand out donations of coin and sympathy in a subtle and underhand manner that does not meet with my approval. I have thrown disguises to the wind, I have done away with public sentiment, and freed myself from the thralldom of society, and emulating the example of that great martyr, the noble emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, in the face of all, high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, I proclaim myself the Negro's friend.

DICK: That, sir, is more than I have heard in a lifetime. Never before has white man so expressed himself in my hearing. Never before has voice so true, or thought so noble echoed o'er the hills of Farmdale Hall, and whate'er your name, or whoe'er you be, from the depths of my heart I thank you. May the echo of your voice resound throughout this mighty land, and may it gladden the hearts of a thousand thousand as it has gladdened mine.

POP: Kind sir, let an ole man also join in blessin' an' thankin' you for the words of hope an' love dat you have given us, an' may God reward and bless you even as you help and succour this poor, poor race.

HARRIS: Take heart, my friends, take heart. You have oppressors, but you also have friends. Your path is strewn with innumerable obstacles of every sort, but strive upwards, and be men; always remembering that God is not the God of caste or creed, while Samuel Harris, representing a thousand more, has pledged himself forevermore the Negro's friend.

BUD: Long life to you, cap'n, an' if you ever find any o' dem purses layin' loosely 'roun, please remember dat here's one poor chile has always got a place for every purse dat you can find.

DICK: Yes, 'tis true, and there are a thousand bleeding hearts and broken spirits that can also find use for every drop of genuine sympathy that you can spare.

HARRIS: I shall remember all you say, and, God helping me, I shall do my duty.

CURTAIN.

ACT I. SCENE 2.

STREET SCENE.

(Enter Josephine, R. W.)

JOSEPHINE: Oh, mercy, mercy, I can never stand that woman. I shall leave her house this very night, for she's no lady. She just thinks that I am an ordinary day's worker, and I'll show her that I ain't. She seems to forget that I was born in the North, and that my mother was a lady. (She holds her head high, and struts around. Enter Bud Thomas, Comedian, R. W., with letter in his hand.)

BUD (aside): Wouldn't that freeze you? Good mornin' ma lady, an' how do you do? (aside.) ('I aint often I get a chance to see a good lookin' gal round here. I must put on my style.) And what is thy name, and from whence comest thou fair Jupiter?

JOSEPHINE: Sir! Did you address me?

BUD: N-o-o, I simply spoke. I merely wanted to ask if you are cognizant (grimace) of the path to Pat Murphy's domicile (grimace), as I have a communication for his royal nibs at this particular period.

JOSEPHINE: Sir! How dare you ask me questions on the public highway? I am from the North, and my mother was a lady.

BUD (aside): Lor', lor', dat certainly is a high stepper. Ar' r' r'. My mother was from the North also, though my father was from the East. (Aside) What a lie!

JOSEPHINE: Is that so? Well, that makes a difference, as we are both from the same place. Under these circumstances, I will condescend to inform you.

BUD (aside): I'se gettin' next.

JOSEPHINE (in a hurried manner): Take the third road to the right, then the fourth to the left, walk fifty paces, then take the fifth turning to the right, turn eastward a hundred paces, turn to the left and go straight forward, and in the distance you will behold the house on the right. Good afternoon!

(Exit Josephine, L. W.)

BUD (stands and looks after her in bewildered manner. He laughs, and imitates Josephine in the directions): Whew! I know as much now as I did before. (He laughs and throws up both hands and drops letter.) Well, dat gal is jest as proper as proper. I guess I'll——

(Enter Goldberg, R. W.)

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, you want to buy a ring? I'll sell you dat ring for a dime. (Shows ring.)

BUD: G'wan, Shylock, dat ring ain't worth more'n a nickel. (Examines ring. Goldberg picks up letter, starts, and hides it in his pocket.) An' moreover, I don't want no wedding ring jest yet. I wants a 'gagement ring fur half de price, 'cause I'se gwine to get engaged to Josephine.

GOLDBERG: Josephine? She works for Craven's woman? Ach, mein frint, do you know the way to her house? Craven has got a bogus deed for dis farm in her house, and I wants to get it.

BUD: Yes, I kin give you de directions jest as I got dem. (*He imitates Josephine.*)

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, what you mean?

BUD: I mean dat I don't know myself, an' so I can't tell you. But gi'e me de ring, an' I'll go wid you.

GOLDBERG: All right, give me five cents, I will have to lose all the profits. Ach, such a business, such a business!

BUD (*putting ring on finger and hunting for money*): ,I put dat doggone money in my clothes somewhere, an' now Ah can't find it high nor low. (*He hunts in cap, pants and shoes.*) I'll pay you next week, Shy. (*He starts off. The Jew catches him by his coat tail.*)

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, was is? I need ze money! If you have not ze money, I will have ze coat.

BUD: Have some stew! Dat coat is ma Sunday-go-to-meetin' an' if you take dat, I'll be as naked as a jay bird.

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, you pay me ze money, an' I will tell you something.

BUD: Not on your life; you tell me first, an' if it is any good, I'll promise you the money next week or the week after.

GOLDBERG: I know ze man dat is the owner of dis plantation.

BUD: I know him too, Shy.

GOLDBERG: Ach, he is a bad man. He killed my uncle down in Mississippi, and den he stole his money an' ran away.

BUD: What?

GOLDBERG: Yes, he did, and wid ze money he also stole ze deed of dis plantation dat belonged to ze tall colored fellow's father, willed to him by my uncle Jacob.

BUD: Lord save us! I never knew dat a Jew would will anything to anybody.

GOLDBERG: You're wrong, mein frint, you're wrong. We are a good people, a good people, and I try me to get ze money and ze land for ze colored man.

BUD: Whew! Won't dat be some good luck for Dick right through here! I'll go right back an' tell him. (*Starts out.*)

GOLDBERG: Ach! Mein frint, no. Say nothin', say nothin'. It may spoil everythin'. When we get all ze proof, den we will do ze business.

BUD: All right, Shy, I am dumb, but I ain't got no money.

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint —

BUD: Shet up, Shy! Here comes Craven an' his gal. Come on back here, 'cause I don't wants dem to see me in such a spectacular assimilation wid an Israelite. (*They retire to center back. Enter Craven and Bell, talking in an excited manner.*)

CRAVEN: But why this anger, Bell? Just stop and reason. (*They stop.*) My love for you, little girl, has always been the same. You are the light of my eyes, and the life of my existence. You are all in all to me, Bell. Believe me, I love you!

BELL: Stop! Do not talk to me of love. It is but a vain waste of words. The selfish passion you entertain is not love, Lemuel Craven; it is the basest thought that man can have for woman. Did you love me as you claim, you would not allow me to plead to share your name, but you would have given me unasked, that which every woman claims as her right. Think of the position in which you place me. I, who have given you my all, who have sacrificed every vestige of my honor, and thrown my character to the winds. Think of the life of ignominy and shame that confronts me, and in thinking—remember that you are the cause. Better, far better were it, had I become the wife of the slave, rather than be the dog of the master!

CRAVEN: Stop, Bell, you are sentimental, and in your sentiment, you forget to use common sense. I am willing to let you share my name, and be the darling of my bosom, but how in the world do you expect me to do it, when—I am married!

BELL: Married! You married! Liar!

CRAVEN: Yes, I am married, and in proof of it, here's my wife's certificate. (*He shows Bell certificate.*)

BELL (*grabbing and reading certificate*): And knowing all this, you have trapped and robbed me of my honor. Knowing this, you willingly deceived and wronged me, thinking but to toy with me at your pleasure, and then to throw me aside to lie crushed and bleeding at your feet. But you are wrong, Lemuel Craven, you are wrong. You have played your hand and lost your game. Think not that you have used me to serve your selfish ends for nought. Forso sure as God reigns in heaven, I shall not live for public scorn, but in the very death I die, I shall earn my revenge, for ere I die, you die! Beware!

CRAVEN: What do you mean, woman? Would you threaten me?

BELL: Yes, I would threaten you, and more Lemuel Craven, I will kill you!

CRAVEN: Kill me?

BELL: Yes, death is too good for a reprobate like you. You who decoy and rob women of their honor; you who tyrannize and oppress helpless mortals. You, Lemuel Craven, who committed robbery and murder for the wealth you now possess, I repeat, death is too good for you.

CRAVEN: Stop! Listen, tell me, what do you know! Tell me, woman, do you know my secret? My God, speak, speak. Did I—

BELL: Yes, you did. Yes recited the whole history of your miserable life to me in your sleep. You told me of the heinous crime you committed to gain your beastly ends. Yes I know your secret—know the very depths of your inmost heart. As you have been false to others, so you are false to me, and ruined and crushed though I be, I shall earn one reward in sending you speedily to your death.

CRAVEN: What! Would you expose me? Bell, Bell, would you dare?

BELL: Yes, I will expose and hang you!

CRAVEN: Then, by God, you shall die first!

(He rushes at her to strangle her. She cries out. Enter Dick with revolver leveled at Craven's heart.)

DICK: Stand back, coward! Black though your soul be with crime, I shall save you the trouble of adding another to your list.

CURTAIN.

ACT II. SCENE 1.

(A room in Craven's house.)

(Craven and Harris sitting at a table drinking.)

CRAVEN: No, Harris, it's no use talking to me about the condition of the Negro. Such stuff never crosses my mind. I have greater things to worry me than these worthless niggers. They'll certainly have to look out for themselves, for if they wait for me to help them, they're liable to wait till doomsday.

HARRIS: And yet you are responsible for them as well as every other white man in America. But for us, they never would have been here, but as they are here now, we at least should do our share in lessening their terrible suffering.

CRAVEN: You're a fool for your pains, and if you take my advice, you'll leave the Negro and his condition alone.

HARRIS: Never! While I live the Negro and the Negro's burden will always be my care. I shall at least do my part in bearing the moral obligations placed upon me by my fathers, and if I cannot be the Negro's helper, I can at least be the Negro's friend.

CRAVEN: Go as far as you please, Sam Harris, but mark my words, you'll get stung for your pains.

HARRIS: Well, stung or not stung, I have taken my resolve, and it will take a better man than you, Lemuel Craven, to change me on that score.

CRAVEN: Don't get insulting, or I'll have to ask you to leave this house.

HARRIS: I had intended doing so at this very moment, and with your leave, I'll say good day! *(Harris exit, R. W.)*

CRAVEN: Good day, Sam Harris, and may the darn niggers make it hot for you. *(Soliloquizing):* The Negro's friend! Ha! ha! ha! None o' that trash for me. I'd rather help a toad out of a hole than that black herd o' cattle. Me a nigger's friend! No, never!

(Exit Craven, slowly.)

(Enter Taylor through a side door sneakingly.)

TAYLOR: I'se scared half to death that I'se gwine to get caught, but I needs some money, and I'se got to take a chance. Dick has to come up

here to-day, and they will think that he took it. (*He rummages around till he finds a drawer with some change. He is in the act of putting it in his pocket when Craven enters with revolver in his pocket.*)

CRAVEN: What are you doing there, you black rascal? Robbing my money, are you? Well, by the Lord, it is the last robbery that you will ever do! (*Levels gun at Taylor's head.*)

TAYLOR (*scared — on his knees*): Don't shoot, boss; don't shoot! I'll do anything you wants me to, but don't shoot, boss; don't shoot!

CRAVEN (*reflecting*): No, I won't shoot. I'll spare your life this time, but remember that any time you refuse to do what I want, I will either shoot you at sight or turn you over to the law, and you know what that means.

TAYLOR: Yes, boss; yes. I'll do anything you wants, anything!

CRAVEN: Well, listen. You know Miss Bell?

TAYLOR: Yes, boss, I knows her!

CRAVEN (*looking round*): Well, I want her smuggled away from Lynchburg.

TAYLOR: Yes, sir!

CRAVEN: You will have to be more than careful, for no one is to see my hand in this. I will give you a key, and you can steal into her house some night when there is no moon. You must sneak into the room where she sleeps, then chloroform her and smuggle her out of Lynchburg in a cart, and when you get her out,— well, you can do what you like with her, only don't let her get back here alive, and remember if you open your mouth about me, I'll turn you over to the law for burglary and assault. Sabih?

TAYLOR: Yes, boss, yes.

CRAVEN: Now, you can keep the money you have, for you'll need it for your work.

TAYLOR: But I'se only got six bits, boss.

CRAVEN: Well, here's a couple of dollars, I guess that'll be enough.

TAYLOR: Plenty, boss, plenty.

CRAVEN (*aside*): I'm glad I caught him here. I hope he will pull it through. (*Aloud*): You are sure you can do this job?

TAYLOR: Sure boss, sure!

CRAVEN: Then swear you'll not betray me!

TAYLOR (*kneeling slowly*): I swear!

CRAVEN: Now, that's all right; you're a brave fellow, and if you stick to me and keep your mouth shut, some o' these days I will fix you up with something, but remember, you must be dumb.

TAYLOR: Yes, boss, Ah'll be as dumb as a beetle.

CRAVEN: Good! Here, take a drink; it will give you nerve for what you have before you.

TAYLOR: Ah's got nerve enough to do anything, boss, anything.

CRAVEN (*softly*): Even to murder?

TAYLOR: Yes, even to murder.

CRAVEN: Well, here—but, no, go; you have got enough to do now, and if you are successful, and you must be successful—do you hear? there must be no failure. After this is done, then there's another; a bigger job. My worst enemy must be removed from my path. The one man who has the faintest clue to the murder and the deed, must be killed, and you must kill him. Do you hear man? You must kill him. Oh, the thought! It mighty nigh drives me mad at times. It comes so glaringly before me, just as if it were yesterday.

TAYLOR: What was it boss, what was it?

(RAVEN: Well, I can't tell you now. Your brain is not big enough to take it all in at once. You do the work, and I'll do the thinking. But come, you must leave here; someone might come in and see you, and it would compromise me, and probably look suspicious; and, besides, it's time you were down to the quarters. Keep your eye on Dick Walker, and if he tries to do anything, you slip up to the house and let me know, and,—remember—not a word of this to anyone. Be still as you value your life.)

TAYLOR: I am yours, boss; yours body and soul.

CRAVEN: That's right, boy; that's right; here, have another drink. (*They drink.*)

CRAVEN: And now go; leave me.

TAYLOR: Dat white man certainly is a friend to me. Ah means to stick to him in spite o' all dem niggers. (*Exit Taylor, R. W.*)

CRAVEN: I'm glad he's gone. The sight of his vile face repulses even me. But pshaw! I am growing nervous and puny. I have been completely upset for the past few days; and Harris' remark, what can it mean? No one was there when I plunged the knife into the old man's breast; no one saw me as I stole away in the dark; and, besides, he has so few relatives living, that no one would take the trouble to follow it up; and if they did, they could prove nothing. Ah, I'm only nervous, I have nothing to fear. It is over eight years, and they haven't done anything yet, and they never will; but the knife; if I could only remember where I threw that knife, for it had my name scratched on the handle; but by this time, it is buried and lost in the ground. Well, Pat is the only living being that knows anything at all, and he darsen't go back on me, because I could hang him before he could hang me. I hope he will come over in answer to that letter.

(*A noise.*) Ah, what was that? Oh, the cat, I guess. Well, I had better provide for her, in case she turns to be human. (*He pours something into the bottle.*) I believe I am getting nervous; I'll go out and take a walk. (*Exit Craven, L. W. Jew Goldberg opens closet door and comes out.*)

GOLDBERG: Ach, Ah guess Ah will take a walk too, but before Ah go, Ah guess Ah will take a drink. (*He drinks, staggers after a while, and falls on floor. Enter Craven, L. W.*)

CRAVEN: Ah ha! (*Laughs loud and long.*) The Cat!

CURTAIN.

ACT II. SCENE 2.

(STREET SCENE.)

(Enter May, R. W., looking around.)

MAY BROOKS: Not here yet? I think it's just awful in Dick always being late, when he has an appointment with me. He promised to meet me here at four sharp *(looking at watch)*, and here it is now two minutes past four, and he's not here yet. Well, I suppose he had to work late. Bless his dear heart; he's so noble and manly, and—and—Oh, I just love him!

(Enter Dick, C.B., stealing up behind May.)

DICK: And who is it that you love so, little girl?

MAY *(startled)*: Oh, Dick, I was just scolding you severely for being so late.

DICK: Y-e-s, it sounded like it. *(May blushes and hides her face.)*

Well, sweetheart, I am bound to return that love, for you are the sweetest and dearest little girl that ever lived.

MAY: Oh, Dick! *(They embrace and retire to C. B.)*

(Enter Josephine, L. W., sees couple, and turns her head.)

JOSEPHINE: Oh, this is too much for my nerves. It is ridiculous, shocking, I cannot stand it. I will have to go to my home. Oh, I am glad I was born in the North, and proud my mother was a lady. *(She walks across stage. (Enter Bud comically, R. W.)*

BUD: Oh, Miss Josephine, ma honey bunches, hold thy beautiful footsteps for a breath of time, for I'm run near to death trying to catch you.

JOSEPHINE *(coldly)*: Sir, did you address me?

BUD: N-o-o! *(Aside)* I wish I had the nerve to ask her. *(Aloud)* Y-e-s, Miss Josephine, I wants to tell you dat Ah loves you

JOSEPHINE: Oh, mercy, mercy, this is too much, I am going to faint.

BUD *(kneeling)*: Oh, Miss Josephine, you is so charming, an' you is so tender. An' when Ah looks into dose lustr'us eyes o' yours, my heart jest melt all to pieces. Oh, Miss Joe, Ah loves you, Ah loves you; jest tell me dat you loves me too.

JOSEPHINE *(coquetting)*: Y-e-s, I guess, I love you, too.

BUD *(rising)*: Oh, ma Josephine! *(They embrace.)*

(Enter Goldberg.)

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, you want to buy a ring? I'll sell you dat ring for a dime.

BUD: Yes, Shy, Ah wants dat weddin' ring now!

GOLDBERG *(showing ring)*: Buy dat ring, an' I will tell you somethin'.

BUD: What is it, Shy?

GOLDBERG *(whispering)*: Ach, mein frint, I have ze proof, I have ze proof; I found a letter in the street written by Craven to a frien, and it tells all about how he got the property.

BUD: I bet it is dat same letter Ah lost when Ah furst met you, honey bunches (*to Josephine.*). (*To Goldberg*) Good for you, Shy, don't forget me when you get the money, 'cause Ah needs de money now. (*Exit Bud and Josephine, R. W. Exit Goldberg after Bud.*)

GOLDBERG: Vas is mit de money, Ach, such a bisness, such a bisness!

(*Dick and May return to C. S.*)

MAY: Ah, Dick, you won't leave me; tell me you will not forsake me. Tell me that you will stay. Don't leave me, Dick; don't leave me.

DICK: Don't, May; don't talk like that. I did not mean to grieve you, I was only going away to better my condition, and to make myself worthy of your love; for here in this place, crushed by this terrible man, I can do nothing. I am chained by a serfdom that is worse than death. But away from here, with a respite in which I can breathe a breath of pure freedom, in a few short months I shall soon be able to elevate myself and reach that sphere in which I shall be able to honorably claim the one I love. (*May sobs aloud.*)

MAY (*drying her tears*): Dick, you're so noble and so good. Tell me, is that your only aim?

DICK: It is my only aim, sweet girl.

MAY: Then go, Dick, and God's love and mine go with you! (*They embrace fondly, and May exits, L. W. Dick watches her till she exits, and turns to leave. Enter Bell Schriner, R. W.*)

BELL: Good evening, Dick, I was just looking for you.

DICK (*surprised*): Looking for me?

BELL: Yes, Dick, I wanted to ask your help. I am in great trouble.

DICK: Trouble, Miss Schriner? What is the matter?

BELL: Dick, I cannot tell you here, it is of a private nature, and we may be overheard. Listen Dick. You have known me from a child. In my tender years when sorrow had not crossed me, I was kind to you. Remember, Dick years ago it was my pleasure to shield you from your oppressors, and to protect you from harm.

DICK: True, true, Miss Schriner, well can I remember the many hard tasks you saved me by taking me away to the house to run your childish errands and—

BELL: Yes, yes. But now those times are past. Those glorious days of innocence and bliss are gone, forever. Now I am a woman, and in trouble, oh, Dick, in deep trouble; and by these same small acts of kindness I rendered you as a child, and by the noble nature of your manhood, I appeal to you for help.

DICK (*rising to the occasion*): And that help you shall have. Anything within the bounds of honor that lies in my power to aid you, shall be done willingly at your command.

BELL: Why do you speak of honor?

DICK: Because I have made it a rule to do nothing that is dishonorable.

BELL (*aside*): My God! (*Aloud*) Listen, Dick; we cannot speak here in

private. Come to my house tonight at eleven. Rap lightly on the casement of my window. If no one answers, then open the door and go in—

DICK: But why this privacy?

BELL: Because the cause demands it. Oh, Dick, would you desert a woman and a friend in her distress?

DICK: No, Miss Schriner, no.

BELL: Then promise that you will be there! (*Bell extends hand.*)

DICK (*slowly*): I promise! (*Takes Bell's hand.*) (*Enter Craven, R. W., at this moment.*)

CRAVEN: Hell and damnation, what does this mean?

BELL: It means that I have found a friend, for this man has sworn to me eternal friendship.

CRAVEN (*enraged, and rushing at Dick*): Eternal friendship! Then for his accursed friendship he shall die! (*Enter Harris with revolver leveled at Craven.*)

HARRIS: Stand where you are, Lemuel Craven, and if you move an inch to harm that man, I'll kill you in your tracks.

CURTAIN.

ACT III. SCENE 1.

(*A room in Bell Schriner's house. Bell sitting on side of bed soliloquizing. Clock strikes eleven.*)

BELL: It is eleven o'clock, and he promised to be here on time. I wonder if he will come. He is the only one that can serve me in this case, for he is the only one of them all that is not afraid of Craven. I will use all my charms to induce him. He is, after all, only a Negro, and he will do my bidding. And he will do it if I have to—, but we will see. Craven must die, yes, die like a dog, and if mine is not the hand that strikes him down, before he dies he shall know that mine was the brain that planned his miserable end. The Negro cannot escape me. He shall do my will. If after my pleadings he refuses, then I shall threaten him with intrusion into this room at midnight. If he still refuses, I shall scream, and in that scream I shall sound his death-knell. I shall have revenge, and that revenge shall be complete. (*A knock.*) But here he comes. Come in. (*Enter Dick.*)

BELL: Ah, Dick, you have come!

DICK: Yes, Miss Schriner, true to my word, I have come; not because I relished the task, but simply to redeem my promise, though a strange feeling tells me that danger threatens me.

BELL: Dick, do you talk of danger? What danger can threaten you here? As my friend and guest, you are free from harm. Nothing can harm you while you are with your Bell. (*Bell goes up to him and puts arms round his neck.*)

DICK: Miss Schriner?—

BELL (*lovingly*): Call me Bell.

DICK (*bewildered*): B-e-l-l—I do not understand.

BELL: There is nothing to understand more than that I love— —

DICK: Stop, woman; stop! Do not talk to me of love. That vile passion that you entertain for me, Bell Schriner, is not love. It is the basest thought that woman can have for man.

BELL (*aside*): My own words. (*Aloud*) Do not be angry, Dick; I meant no harm. I wanted your help. You are the only one that can assist me, and you shall!

DICK: Shall?

BELL: Yes, listen, Lemuel Craven has wrecked my life. He has stripped me of my honor, and robbed me of my virtue. A few short years ago, I was pure and innocent, the pride of the community in which I lived, honored and respected by all. To-day I am fallen. Crushed and debased, I am the sport of all that pass by me. Humiliated and wounded as I am, I cannot live to bear it. Life has become unbearable. I shall seek consolation in death. This man has not only wronged me; he has crushed others, and among them, *you*. You also are one of his victims. You are held by a thralldom that is worse than death. Free yourself. Shake off the shackles that bind you to this man. Kill him! and in killing him you rid the world of your worst enemy and mine. Do you understand, (*coming closer*) I say, kill him, and save yourself and me.

DICK: You are right, Bell.

BELL: Ah!—

DICK: Lemuel Craven deserves death for his action. He deserves a worse fate for his illicit conduct to you, but mine shall never be the hand to strike him down, for the good book says, "Thou shalt not kill!"

BELL: Listen, Dick Walker, you are in my power. Refuse to do my bidding and I shall send forth such a scream as shall bring the lyncher's rope around your neck!

DICK: My God, Bell, what do you mean?

BELL: I mean that I am a wronged and desperate woman, seeking but the one object—the death of my destroyer. I mean that Lemuel Craven's vile soul shall stand before the bar of God before another day has gone. I mean to have justice, and if I cannot have justice, then I shall have revenge!

DICK: But why implicate me in this? Why——

BELL: Because there is none other. You are the only one that would have courage to kill him.

DICK (*rising to the occasion*): My courage, Bell Schriner, balks at murder.

BELL (*enraged*): What! Do you refuse? You refuse to do my will? You on whom I based my plans! Tell me, man, do you refuse?

DICK: Yes, I refuse!

BELL (*crazed*): Then by all the devils in hell, you shall die for your refusal.

DICK: What will you do? Speak, what will you do?

BELL: I will brand you as my traducer and they will hang you till you are dead.

DICK (*excited*): You cannot do that, Bell. I tell you before God and his angels, that if you have one claim left on which you base your womanhood, you cannot do this crime. I dare you!

BELL: Dare me! Fool, you do not know a woman. Listen! (*She screams. Dick looks around and sees window. On sound of footsteps and voices outside, he goes to window.*)

DICK: Trapped, ruined, lost, and by a cursed woman. God forgive you Bell Schriner, for I cannot!

(*Enter Pat Murphy, Dago Frank, Josephine and others. Josephine runs to her mistress.*)

PAT: What is it? What does that scream mean?

BELL: It means that the Negro, Dick Walker, has—has—has—Oh, God! (*She faints.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III. SCENE 2.

(*There is shooting in the distance before the curtain rises.*)

(*Dick, Bud and May on stage at curtain with guns in their hands. Dick rising from floor.*)

DICK: It's no use, the end has come. Our ammunition is about gone, and I must face the end. For these four days, we have successfully held these devils incarnate at bay, but at last we must give up. Without ammunition we are lost, and now while we have a moment's respite, let me thank and bless you dearest May, for your noble spirit of bravery and courage. Few women would dare assist in this act of open defiance and rebellion against the Unwritten Law; but you have dared it May. You have stood by me through thick and thin, facing danger, starvation and death, and from the depths of my heart I thank you. But go, you and Bud, go, and remember that Dick Walker, Negro, died for a crime he never committed. May, I love you. Since we met, I have given you my purest and sincerest love. Ours has been a happy moment, but it is past; the end has come. Kiss me, my love, and leave me. Say good bye and go. The time has come,—go!

MAY: You have lost courage, Dick, the strain has been too much for you. I leave you, Dick? Never! The tribe of Indians from which my mother descended, was never known to leave unaided a brother in distress, and while a drop of that blood flows through these veins, I shall stand your aid, or die with you. Unworthy the name of woman would I be to leave you in the worse moments of your trouble. No, my friend, I will not leave you. It is now that you need me. My place is by your side, and to the last, live or die, there I shall be found! But do not fear,

the end is not yet, for with my woman's instinct, I foresaw this moment and prepared for it. Look! (*She pulls belt of cartridges from under her skirt.*) And by the time that this is gone, help may reach us, for as a race we have many enemies, but we also have some friends!

BUD: My father always used to say dat you can't tell nothin' 'bout a woman. Day is always got sometin' stickin' up their sleeve.

DICK: Your words have put new life in me, May. In the very expression of your thought, I can see a new line of hope, and with this string of cartridges we may yet live to see the dawn of a brighter day.

BUD (*who has been looking around for the enemy*): Stop dat spoonin' gal, and load up dem guns, 'cause Ah hear dem dogs a-barkin', an' Ah shur Lord means to stop anything dat dares to trespass on these premises. (*The shooting continues. They both shoot back, while May loads the rifles.*)

BUD (*hit with bullet and falling*): Ah is gone shur dat time. Good-bye, folks, an' if you live to see ma Josephine, tell her dat Ah'll meet her bye an' bye. (*A little more fighting.*)

DICK (*hit with bullet and falling*): Ah, it's my time now. May, May, fly for your life; fly girl, fly, for woman though you be, these cursed rebels would not hesitate to shoot you down like a dog. (*He faints.*)

(*Enter Pat Murphy, Dago Frank, and others cautiously, R. W.*)

PAT: Ah, we've got 'em, we've got 'em!

FRANK: Yes, we got him, he's safe!

MAY (*standing with one foot on Dick*): No, fiends, you haven't got him. He's as far from you as the East is from the West. Come near if you dare, and touch him with but a look, and woman though I be, I'll tear you limb from limb.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

(*Ten Years Later.*)

(*Reception room in May Brooks' house. Enter Pop Fray in dress suit slowly.*)

POP FRAY: Well, well, well, dis is a strange world. How things have changed in the last ten years. Little did I think when dat poor boy said good-bye, an' stole off in the night to escape dem awful men—yes, little did I think dat I would ever see him alive again. But Lor', lor', now dey tell me dat he is a man in Congress, and is jest comin' home from some furrin' place where he's been serving as a minister, Lor', dis certainly is a funny world.

(*Enter Josephine, evening dress, with a Catholic Nun, dressed in black and wearing veil.*)

JOSEPHINE: Oh, mercy, Sister Agnes, I think it's just terrible in these people to keep us waiting. The telegram to May from the boys, said that they would be here at eight o'clock, and I just hope that they will not arrive to find no one here. In my home in the North, everyone is there on time.

(Enter May Brooks and her chaperon.)

MAY: And we are also punctual here in the South, my dear Miss Josephine. But how are you?

JOSEPHINE: Oh, May, May, you are just stunning, but where have you been all these years?

MAY: In Washington, dear, auditing the books of the National Benefit Association, but where have you been?

JOSEPHINE: I have been teaching in the High School at St. Joseph's Seminary in Richmond, but let me introduce you to my friend and chaperon, Sister Agnes.

MAY: I am more than pleased to meet you, Sister Agnes. Make the acquaintance of my very dear friend and chaperon, Mrs. Sadie Baker.

JOSEPHINE: Pleased indeed, Mrs. Baker. Sister Agnes, Mrs. Baker.

MAY *(seeing Pop)*: Oh, Pop; my dear old friend, how are you?

POP: Well, Daughter, I'm glad to see you. I jest love to see de young people doin' so nicely.

MAY: It is now high time for our guests.

JOSEPHINE: Oh, mercy! I suppose they will all be late.

FOOTMAN *(announcing)*: Mr. and Mrs. Aldridge Taylor. *(They enter and greet the hostess.)*

FOOTMAN: The Hon. Thomas Livingstone.

Bishop and Mrs. Auriel Thompson.

The Hon. Booker F. Wellington and daughter.

The Hon. Harry Basey and wife.

The Misses Warrens and brother.

MAY: And now, my friends, we await but the Hon. Richard Walker and Secretary, and our number will be complete. *(Sound of motor horn outside.)*

MAY: Ah, here they come!

JOSEPHINE: Oh, I'll just die with joy to see my darling Bud!

FOOTMAN: The Honorable Richard Walker and Secretary. *(Enter Dick and Bud, dressed in diplomatic attire, and wearing the sash of the diplomatic corps. They salute the company, embrace their respective sweethearts and talk a moment.)*

MAY: Friends, I take great pleasure in introducing to you my betrothed husband, the Honorable Richard Walker, late member of Congress, and Minister plenipotentiary to the Court of Liberia.

COMPANY *(bowing)*: Delighted!

MAY: Also Albert Thomas, Esq., Assistant Secretary of The Emancipation Commission.

COMPANY *(bowing)*: Delighted!

MAY: And now, my friends, we will enjoy ourselves to the full, for sure there's not a cloud in our sky.

FOOTMAN: Mr. Lemuel Craven.

DICK: Lemuel Craven! What does he want here? (*Enter Craven dressed stylishly.*)

CRAVEN: Merely to arrest and punish you for the seduction and murder of the late Bell Harriet Schriner.

DICK: It is a lie, and you know it. The whole plot was a fiendish trick of either of your making. It is true that I went to Bell Schriner's house on the night of her disappearance, but it was only to fulfill my promise, and it was only when I refused to murder you, Lemuel Craven, that she sent forth the cursed shriek that hounded me from the face of man. But Providence was good to me. Kind fortune smiled on me, and with the aid of this girl and him (*pointing to Bud*), I escaped into the woods. There for four long weary days and nights, suffering all the tortures of hell, we fought in desperation for our lives. But at last the end came. Our ammunition had gone, and when we fell wounded, this brave girl fought with tooth and nail, defending our helpless bodies from abuse and shame till help came in the form of the now Honorable Samuel E. Harris, the Negro's friend. Since that day, I left Lynchburg, having but one thought, but one desire, and that to vindicate my honor to the world and punish my accusers.

CRAVEN (*laughing*): Ha! ha! ha! A good yarn indeed, but one that will not hold water. Officer, arrest that man. I charge him with the murder of a white woman, the late Bell Harriet Schriner.

SISTER AGNES: That murder was never committed, Lemuel Craven. (*She throws back veil.*) Look in that face and tell me if you recognize in it a likeness to the late Bell Harriet Schriner.

CRAVEN: (*startled*) What! Alive! You?

S. AGNES: Yes, alive and well. A humble penitent and a true Christian, forgiving you as freely, Lemuel Craven, even as I hope to be forgiven. (*To Dick*) Ah, my friend, forgive me both for the past, and for the present. My presence here tonight was but to vindicate your honor, and to hold you blameless in the sight of the world.

DICK: But where have you been all this time?

S. AGNES: Ah, my friend, it's a sad tale, a sad tale; but I will tell you. On the night when I sent forth the scream that would sound the death-knell of your life, I was sitting by my window watching the men and bloodhounds, as they searched through the bushes for your tracks. Hardly had the sound of their footsteps died away in the distance, when I felt a hand clapped roughly over my mouth, and the vile odor of chloroform began stealing through my brain. In a few moments, I had lost consciousness, and awoke several hours later, to find myself bound and gagged, lying in the bottom of a cart that was making its way through the woods. My abductor, probably in his excitement, had not done his work well, and by dint of hard work, and many a deep gash, I succeeded in removing the cords from my arms. It was but the work of a moment to untie the gag, but fearing lest I should be killed, I lay still till on hearing the approach of a body of horsemen, I sprang up and screamed for help.

In a few moments my abductor, Jim Taylor, was surrounded, and as soon as I had told my tale they shot him down, and riddled his body with bullets. Ah, my friend, shun me if you will, despise me as you may, but believe me when I tell you that it was the sight of that mutilated body that shattered all my plans. During the melee, I escaped into the woods, and amid the most dire suffering and dangers, made my way to Richmond, where I entered a convent and took the veil. In talking to this lady yesterday, I heard that you were returning home a famous and an honored man, and anticipating the scene that has just transpired, I asked leave of the lady to go with her, and for the first time in ten years, I have left the convent to tell my story to the world.

DICK (*extending hand*): Brave woman! And may God forgive you, as I also do.

BUD: My! My! My! (*Josephine nudges him to be quiet.*)

BELL: This is more than strange!

FOOTMAN: The Honorable Samuel E. Harris.

DICK: Ah, the Negro's friend! (*Enter Harris.*)

CRAVEN: What! You here?

HARRIS: Yes, like the bad penny, I am always turning up at the wrong moment, but hearing that my little friend and protege was returning home from his glorious flight abroad, I could not resist the temptation of running down from Washington to congratulate him on his rapid rise up the precarious ladder of fame.

CRAVEN: Well, there has been a little misunderstanding here, but it is all over now. Come, officer, we will go. This is no place for us; let us be going.

HARRIS: Just a moment, officer, before you go. Don't be in a hurry, the evening is young yet, and we have lots of time.

CRAVEN: I have another engagement and cannot wait. Come officer.

OFFICER: Courtesy bids me wait the pleasure of the Honorable Samuel E. Harris, and with your permission we will hear him.

HARRIS: That's right, officer. You might hear from me when I get back to Congress. You know how to respect your superiors. With your permission, friends, I will tell you a little story. (*Music.*) Some years ago, in a little town in Mississippi, there lived an old recluse; a man practically wealthy and by birth a Christian Jew. He numbered among his few close friends a young and dashing ranchman, who visited his home quite often. The colored servants on the plantation were good and loyal to their master, and he loved them as his children. One night, quite mysteriously, the old man was murdered, stabbed to the heart by an unknown hand. His safe was broker into, his papers rifled, and a certain deed and all the money stolen. Year followed year, and no clue to the murder ever came to light, till some weeks ago, the workmen on tearing down the old house to replace it with a new, found in one of the old crevices hidden securely away from the prying eyes of man, a little ob-

ject of evidence bearing the strange initials, L. C. Knowing that I possessed a very dear friend who bore these initials in his name, and feeling sure that he could throw some light upon the subject if he wanted to do so, I sent another friend to his house to call upon this gentleman. Through some process, somewhat inconceivable to me, this friend found his way into the gentleman's house, and ultimately into his closet, where through no fault of his own, he heard evidence enough to send a dozen men to the Electric Chair. On leaving the closet to make a hasty retreat, after the master had withdrawn, my friend through his love for liquor, was drugged, and would have been killed by the returning master, had a servant not entered at that particular moment to prevent the committal of a ghastly deed. Having, as aforesaid, brought with me a little article that might serve us at this time, I shall now ask you, my friend, do you happen to recognize this bloody article that I hold in my hand? (*Harris shows handkerchief.*)

CRAVEN: No, I do not recognize it.

HARRIS: Then tell me, Lemuel Craven, do you recognize this deadly weapon bearing your own name inscribed on its handle.

CRAVEN: No, I do not recognize it, and further, those are no proofs against me, for there are others in Mississippi that bear the same name, though they come of different stock.

(*At this moment they hear loud talking outside, and Goldberg enters, struggling with footman.*)

GOLDBERG: Ach, mein frint, vas is, are you crazy?

HARRIS: Ah, my friend, the very man I wanted to see. Allow me, my friends, to present to you the very distinguished Levi Goldberg. (*Goldberg bows.*)

GOLDBERG (*on seeing Craven, becomes frightened*): Dat man here! Hold him fast, officer, hold him fast, fur dat is a bad man, hold him fast.

HARRIS: Mr. Goldberg, will you do us the kindness to produce the letter found by you some time ago, written by this man, Lemuel Craven?

GOLDBERG: Yes, mein frint, mit pleasure. (*Goldberg produces letter.*)

HARRIS: Officer, do us the favor to read that letter aloud.

OFFICER (*reading aloud*):

Farmdale Plantations,
Lynchburg, Va., June 10, 1902.

Dear Pat:

I am sending this note to you by one of the boys. Come to me as soon as you get it, for I think that the police have got a clue in regard to the affair in Mississippi, and I have decided that if they get too close, I will skip out for a while and leave you to manage the place. I haven't heard anything about the other, though for the life of me, I can't remember what I did with the knife, as I was quite excited at the time. I wouldn't care a rap if I hadn't scribbled my name like a fool on the

han'll of the cursed thing. Come over and drink some booze with me, for I am feeling mighty queer of late. Tear this up as soon as you read it.

Your pal,

LEMUEL CRAVEN.

CRAVEN (*aside*): I guess it's all up with me. There's only one thing left, and that's to make a bold rush for freedom. (*Craven rushes at officer knocks him down, and starts out, when Bud levels gun at his head.*)

BUD: Don't move no more, Lemuel Craven, 'cause Ah swear if you do, I'll forget mesself an' turn loose, sure as blazes.

OFFICER (*getting up, and putting handcuffs on Craven*): All right, Mr. man, that's your game, eh? Knocking down an officer of the law. Well, if I have anything to do with it, they'll put you in the Electric Chair before you have even got a chance to go to trial. Come on with me. (*Officer and Craven exit, R. W.*)

BUD: Lor', Lor', dat Providence is certainly a 'sterious thing. Dat letter was the same one Craven sent me to give Pat Murphy, and I must have dropped it when Ah met ma better quarter.

JOSEPHINE: My darling, you mean your better half.

MAY: Yes, Justice is of the Lord, for as the good Book tells us, "The wicked shall fall by their own hand, and the unrighteous surely shall perish."

DICK: That is true, dear, and there is another little passage that tells us, that "when ye pass through the waters, I shall be with you, and when ye stumble, ye shall not fall."

HARRIS: And now, my friends, I must leave you, but before I go, I would like to present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Walker to be, the rightful deed to the Farmdale Plantation, willed to your father, sir, by his late master, the lamented Jacob Goldberg, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, eight hundred and seventy six.

DICK: I thank you, Mr. Harris. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel to you, not only for this, but for the many acts of kindness and friendship you have shown me all my life.

HARRIS: Don't thank me man, it's nothing, nothing. What I have done, I was in duty bound to do. In doing our little to help your race, we are but helping ourselves above the memories of the past; and as a people let us forget our color and caste, and unite in the one grand cause of making the American people the greatest nation in the world.

BUD: I says Amen to that. Dat's the kind o' speech making Ah wants to do when Ah starts out stumpin' next fall.

POP: Chil'ren, dis is de most wonderful deliverance dat Ah ever seen, and you all ought to be thankful dat God has brought you out more than conquerors.

MAY: Yes, Pop, we all realize our great thankfulness to God, and we indeed praise his glorious name for his safe deliverance. This is indeed a happy

ending to what seemed likely to have been a terrible tragedy. Ah, Dick but for the timely appearance of these three noble souls, this would have been a terrible homecoming, but as it is, we are happy, yes, very, very happy!

DICK: Yes, my friends, in the wise Providence of God, he has saved me from what must have been a terrible fate. This deliverance, my darling is stranger than fiction,—

A romance of Love and Hate
A guide to the wise, and a help to the weak;
For this is "THE HAND OF FATE: "

CURTAIN.

The End.



SEP 22 1918



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